

44 and 46-48, rejected claims 1-3 and 7-9, and objected to claims 4-6 and 10-13 as being dependent on a rejected claim but indicated they would be allowable if combined with the base claim and any intervening claims.

The above amendment to claim 1 incorporates the changes discussed at the interview which the Examiner agreed would overcome the combination of the Gonser et al. and Benjamin et al. patents. Dependent claim 49 has been added to more completely define the advantageous membrane switch structure claimed in claim 1. For the reasons to follow, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 defines novel and unobvious subject matter and that this application is therefore now in complete condition for allowance.

The membrane switch plates disposed on the side edges of the seat back advantageously present a low voltage and more sterile environment for both the operator and the patient. As demonstrated at the interview, the flat membrane switches also serve to prevent accidental actuation of the switches and resultant dangerous movement of the chair by inadvertent contact with the operator or assistant during a medical procedure. This is because the switches require the operator to apply very direct finger pressure to the flat surface of the switch plate for actuation to take place. An inadvertent contact with the outside surface with another part of the operator's body or a brush up against the switch plate will generally not cause actuation. Finally, the flat surface of the switch plate is also much easier to maintain in a sterile condition by using a sterile wipe on the flat outer surface.

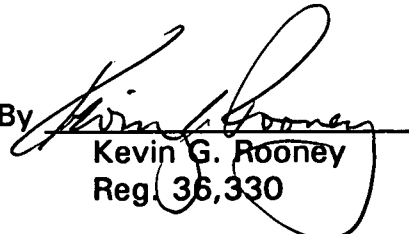
The Benjamin et al. patent may use the term "membrane switch assembly" when referring to switch assembly 102 in line 42 of col. 8, however, Applicant would submit that the entire switch assembly would more accurately be defined as a "toggle switch" since a protruding lever 60 is actually the part being moved by the operator to actuate the switch. The switch assembly of Benjamin et al., even if disposed on a seat back, would therefore provide a protruding lever or toggle which would be even more prone to accidental actuation than a conventional push button switch.

As the Benjamin et al. patent fails to teach or suggest flat, tactile feel membrane switches on a seat back as claimed in claim 1, and as none of the other art of record teaches or suggests the same, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 and its dependent claims are allowable.

In view of the foregoing, this application is submitted to be in complete condition for allowance and early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. If there is any further matter which may be resolved by telephone conference, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned so as to expedite the allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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